GOVERNMENT OF

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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ZONING COMMISSION

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PUBLIC HEARING

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IN THE MATTER OF:

| Case No. 03-32

CORNELL UNIVERSITY, SQUARE 69, LOT 821

Thursday, December 11, 2003

Hearing Room 220 South 441 4th Street, N.W. Washington, D.C.

The Public Hearing of Case No. 03-32 by the District of Columbia Zoning Commission convened at 6:30 p.m. in the Office of Zoning Hearing Room at 441 4th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., Carol J. Mitten, Chairperson, presiding.

ZONING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

CAROL J. MITTEN
ANTHONY J. HOOD
PETER G. MAY

Chairperson Vice Chairperson Commissioner

OFFICE OF ZONING STAFF PRESENT:

ALBERTO BASTIDA

Secretary

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W. WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701 OTHER AGENCY STAFF PRESENT:

ELLEN McCARTHY

KAREN THOMAS

Deputy Director, Office of Planning Office of Planning

I-N-D-E-X

Presentation by Christopher Coll	- ·
Holland & Knight	6
Presentation by Linda Jarschauer	Johnson,
Director, Cornell in Wash:	ington
Program	10

1	P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S
2	(6:38 p.m.)
3	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: Good evening, ladies
4	and gentlemen.
5	This is a public hearing of the Zoning
6	Commission of the District of Columbia for Thursday,
7	December 11, 2003.
8	My name is Carol Mitten, and joining me
9	this evening are Vice Chairman Anthony Hood and
10	Commissioner Peter May.
11	The subject of this evening's hearing is
12	Zoning Commission Case Number 03-32. This is a
13	request by Cornell University for special exception
14	relief pursuant to Sections 352.2 and 3104 of the
15	Zoning Regulations, 11 DCMR, for approval to expand
16	its Washington, D.C. campus to include the lower level
17	of the existing building located at 2148 O Street,
18	N.W., which is Lot 821 in Square 69.
19	Notice of today's hearing was published in
20	the D.C. Register on October 24, 2003, and copies of
21	that announcement are in the wall bin near the door.
22	This hearing will be conducted in
23	accordance with the provisions of 11 DCMR Section
24	3117.

The order of procedure will be as follows:

preliminary matters, followed by the presentation of the Petitioner's case, report by the Office of Planning, reports of other government agencies, report of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission that's affected -- in this case it's 2B -- organizations and persons in support, and organizations and persons in opposition.

The following time constraints will be maintained in this hearing. The Petitioner will have 15 minutes, organizations five minutes, individuals three minutes.

The Commission intends to adhere to these time limits as strictly as possible in order to hear the case in a reasonable period of time. The Commission reserves the right to change the time limits for presentations if necessary, and notes that no time shall be ceded.

All persons appearing before the Commission are to fill out two witness cards. These cards are on the table near the door. Upon coming forward to speak to the Commission, please give both cards to the Reporter, who is sitting to our right.

The decision of the Commission in this case must be based exclusively on the public record.

To avoid any appearance to the contrary, the

1	Commission requests that persons present not engage
2	the members of the Commission in conversation during a
3	recess or at any other time.
4	Staff will be available throughout the
5	hearing to discuss any procedural questions. Please
6	turn off all beepers and cell phones at this time, so
7	as not to disrupt these proceedings.
8	At this time, we will consider any
9	preliminary matters. Mr. Bastida?
10	SECRETARY BASTIDA: Madam Chairman, the
11	staff has no preliminary matters. Thank you.
12	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: Thank you.
13	Mr. Collins, anything?
14	All right. Well, then, will all of those
15	individuals who plan to testify please rise now to
16	take the oath.
17	Ms. Schellin, raise your right hand.
18	(Whereupon, an oath was administered to
19	all persons planning to testify.)
20	MS. SCHELLIN: Thank you.
21	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: Thank you.
22	Go right ahead whenever you're ready.
23	MR. COLLINS: Thank you. Madam Chair,
24	members of the Commission, my name is Christopher
25	Collins with the law firm of Holland & Knight. Seated

to my left is Jill Cooper of our office. Ms. Cooper is a planner. And seated to my right is Linda Jarschauer Johnson, Executive Director of the Cornell Center. To my far right, Ashley Howell from RTKL, who is here to answer questions about the proposal.

This is an application for amendment to an approved campus plan and further processing for the expansion of the campus into the lower level of the building at 2148 O Street, N.W.

Madam Chair, members of the Commission, you have seen some large campus plan cases, and you have seen some that are not so large, and this is probably the smallest that you have seen or ever will see.

Years, pursuant to BZA approval in 1983, and the two people in the middle of the table in front of you were here then to present the case. So Ms. Johnson has extensive knowledge about the operations of the school, the campus, the Cornell Center, and will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Cornell has occupied, as I said, for 20 years in total harmony with the neighborhood. The submission that we've presented to you fully -- shows how we fully meet the requirements of Section 210 of

the regulations for a campus plan.

We have met with the ANC, and they have indicated their support. The Office of Planning has indicated support in their written report, and the Department of Transportation has indicated no opposition.

The exhibits that are attached to our submission, I'll quickly go through those. Exhibit A, Tab A, shows the location of the site. Tab B is the zoning map. You can see that we are within a block of the commercial corridor just west of Dupont Circle in the west end area in an R-5-B zone. C is the -- Exhibit C is a plat of the property. Exhibit D are several photos of the property.

Just to orient you, D-1 is the -- shows the front of the building, the O Street front of the building from both the left side and the right side. There are two shots of the same frontage. On Exhibit D-2, that shows the corner of the site, the 22nd and the O Street side. On the right-hand side is the 22nd Street side.

And if you look in that photo you can see down at the bottom of the building two white -- actually, they are doors, the two entrances into the lower level, which are depicted on the plan. Just to

orient you where it sits in relation to the property.

D-3 shows some of the signage of the Cornell Center, and there will be some additional signs at those two doors, which will be similar in character to the signage that's shown on D-3. And D-4 just shows the front door on O Street of the Cornell Center.

Exhibit E is the original order from 1983, good for a period of time. which was Ιt was reapproved in 1987 permanently. And then, Tab G is the plans that we are presenting to you tonight. Exhibit H is the campus plan itself, the one-sheet campus plan from 1987 showing the layout of the floor of the -- the first floor of the building at that There have been some slight changes, which time. we'll talk about and have been discussed in our submission.

Tab Ι is our proposed conditions of And we have spoken to the Office approval. Planning about these proposed conditions, and I'm sure they'll have something to say about them. And Exhibit J is the outline of testimony of Linda Johnson.

So unless there are any questions at this time, we'd like to go directly to our first and only

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1	witness to make a direct presentation, to Ms. Johnson.
2	We have her testimony in writing, which we'd like to
3	submit to the Commission, and then Ms. Johnson will
4	simply summarize her testimony.
5	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: Please go ahead.
6	MS. JOHNSON: Good evening.
7	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: Would you turn on
8	your microphone there?
9	MS. JOHNSON: Okay. My name is Linda
10	Jarschauer Johnson. I live at 2415 20th Street, N.W.,
11	in Washington, D.C. I am currently, and have been for
12	the past 20 years, the Executive Director of the
13	Cornell in Washington Program.
14	Just to make a clarification, we used
15	Cornell in Washington as the term to describe the
16	major academic program that is housed in the Cornell
17	Center. Therefore, the Cornell Center is actually the
18	university's campus in Washington, D.C.
19	The Cornell in Washington Program provides
20	an opportunity for selected juniors and seniors to
21	spend a semester in Washington. They work as externs.
22	They take classes and they do research.
23	I've attached for your information to the
24	testimony just a sample a list of where the
25	students have externships this semester. Over the 20

years, we've had more than 2,000 students participate.

So obviously our entire list is much more extensive and very varied.

So in addition to working three days a week at an externship of their choice, the students carry a full academic load, which includes taking one of the core courses for eight credits and one or two electives which are taught, for a total of 12 or 18 credits.

I am pleased to say that most of the students say that this is their best Cornell semester, and we tend to think it's because, unlike the main campus, our classes are very small, and we are not centrally isolated in upstate New York.

We are very proud of our website and invite any of you who would be interested to take a look at it at ciw.cornell.edu. And in addition to the semester program which is described there, in 1998 we started a summer program, and we have a group of students who come for a much shorter duration, have fewer elective courses, and don't get to do the research part. But it does exist.

We started in 1980, not in this building, but with six students and a budget of \$5,000. In 1983, we negotiated a lease for 2148 O Street, and the

students lived on the second, third, and fourth floor as a matter of right.

And in that year, we also asked for zoning approval to use the first floor as our campus. That was approved in January of 1984, but for a three-year period. And we went back in December of 1987, and we were granted permission in perpetuity as long as our students were living upstairs.

And it was very gratifying to say that some of the neighbors who had concerns about Cornell coming to the neighborhood in 1983 came back in 1987 and spoke on our behalf.

So I think we've enjoyed good relations. When Cornell first thought about buying the building last year, I did go to the ANC and the Dupont Circle Citizens Association, told them what we were thinking about, asked them if they had any concerns, because we wanted to be sure that we addressed anything up front and didn't get into something that was going to be problematic.

Basically, there were no negative comments, because we are not expanding the number of students, and we're still not letting them bring cars.

And we're not serving alcoholic beverages, and we are planning to continue to be the good neighbors that we

are.

So the big news was that after 20 years Cornell finally bought the building on -- in July of this past year. And now we have the whole building and wanted to expand into the lower level.

From 1985 to 1998, while we were leasing the upper four floors, the Capitol Women's Clinic rented the lower level. It was a medical clinic that performed abortions in addition to other medical procedures and was the scene of large protests every year in January on the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade.

They went out of business in August of 1998 for financial reasons, for no other reason. And the lower level has been vacant ever since.

Basically, we'd like to expand to the lower level for the following purposes. We want to make an up-to-date video conference space and have some meeting space. We want to have some storage space, which we've been sorely lacking these 20 years.

The Cornell Club of Washington, which is a volunteer-based alumni association, has a little office which currently is on the first floor that they use to store their materials. We're going to move them down to the lower level, so that we can use the space on the first floor for academic purposes for our

faculty and tutors.

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And then, they have monthly meetings at the Cornell Center, which used to be on the first floor and will more than likely be on the lower level once we get this done.

addition, there Cornell are some researchers who are also based in Washington, D.C., the Cornell Center for Policy Research. They used to space near Dupont Circle at the Carnegie They now are on upper Connecticut Avenue, and they are very anxious to come down and be in our facility, so they can have our access to the internet and other Cornell services that we can have by being in the same building.

As I'll reiterate again, we're not going to increase the number of students. We're still going to discourage students from bringing cars. And if they do, they have to give us proof that it's parked off the neighborhood streets. We do not help them get -- we do not let them get residential parking permits.

We don't serve alcohol beverages, because the majority of the students are under 21. And there will be some additional employees with the moving in of this research group, but their total is no more than eight or 10. And the nature of their research is

that they are not there all at the same time, and it's certainly less occupancy than when there was a clinic down below.

RTKL has worked with us to develop a conceptual plan, and Ashley Howell is here to answer any questions that you may have about that space.

As stated on pages 5 through 11 of our prehearing statement, as well as in the report of the Office of Planning, we believe that our application meets the tests for special exception approval, and I would be pleased to answer any specific questions that you may have.

were very gratified that on November 12th ANC-2B meeting at the the group unanimously approved our application, and the Chairman even commented that it was probably -- ours probably the first campus plan he had ever heard of that had no opposition.

Cornell has been a part of the community for the past 20 years. We've tried to be a good neighbor, and I think the lack of opposition from neighborhood organizations and residents has proved that we have succeeded.

We hope that our application for an exception will be granted, and we will continue to be

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1	a vital part of the Dupont Circle community.
2	Thank you.
3	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: Thank you.
4	Anything else?
5	MR. COLLINS: No, that concludes our
6	testimony.
7	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: All right.
8	MR. COLLINS: We're available for
9	questions.
10	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: Okay. Any questions?
11	Any questions, Mr. May?
12	COMMISSIONER MAY: I have to have at least
13	one question. On the plans that on the ground
14	floor plan there is a note all the way to the left
15	side that says, "Accessible lift to the first floor."
16	What the heck is that, and how does that relate to
17	the building?
18	MS. JOHNSON: Want me to do that? In
19	1993, when we negotiated our second 10-year lease, we
20	did some improvements, and we decided that we should
21	have handicapped access to the first floor. At the
22	time, the clinic was in the basement.
23	And so on the side of that building in the
24	alley we opened up one of the windows and made it a
25	door, and we put one of those automatic lifts, so you

1	can go in on the first floor and
2	COMMISSIONER MAY: Okay.
3	MS. JOHNSON: come up. We've never
4	used it. We haven't had a handicapped student. And
5	there is all likelihood that once we have the basement
6	as part of our plan that then we could have keys, so
7	that the elevator could go down, and we might be able
8	to get rid of that.
9	COMMISSIONER MAY: Okay. So the elevator
LO	does go all the way down to the lowest level?
11	MS. JOHNSON: Yes. It's currently stopped
12	at the first floor, but it is possible for it to go
13	down.
14	COMMISSIONER MAY: It's just keyed off
15	from the bottom?
16	MS. JOHNSON: Yes.
17	COMMISSIONER MAY: Okay. I saw it
18	there, and I was wondering whether it was like a
19	mistake, because I didn't see any door there or any
20	way to get into the building from there.
21	MS. JOHNSON: Yes, right. So that what
22	looks like a window there, no oh, yes, it's the
23	door is not on that first on the lower level. It's
24	on the first floor. So what looks like a window of
25	the meeting room on the first floor

1	COMMISSIONER MAY: Yes.
2	MS. JOHNSON: is actually a door.
3	COMMISSIONER MAY: Okay. All right. And
4	then, one other question. What happened to the
5	architecture program?
6	MS. JOHNSON: Well, they were there for
7	about eight years of the first 10-year lease.
8	COMMISSIONER MAY: Yes.
9	MS. JOHNSON: And I was telling Ashley
10	that
11	COMMISSIONER MAY: Washington just wasn't
12	interesting enough?
13	(Laughter.)
14	MS. JOHNSON: Well, it was that Cornell
15	started an architectural program in Rome. And it was
16	a little hard to compete.
17	(Laughter.)
18	COMMISSIONER MAY: Yes.
19	MS. JOHNSON: So more students were
20	wanting to go to Rome than to come to Washington. And
21	they didn't have the resources to staff both of them,
22	so
23	COMMISSIONER MAY: Okay.
24	MS. JOHNSON: we lost out.
25	COMMISSIONER MAY: All right. Thanks.

1 CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: Okay. I think we're done. 2 3 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you. Ready to move to the 4 CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: 5 report by the Office of Planning. Ms. Thomas. THOMAS: Good evening, Madam Chair, 6 MS. members of the Commission. I'm Karen Thomas with the 7 Office of Planning's report on Cornell University's 8 9 request for an amendment to its approved campus plan 10 and further processing to permit space expansion for 11 current programs to the basement of its building. 12 ΟP reviewed the application based criteria outlined in Section 210.1, and we determined 13 That the university has occupied and 14 as follows. 15 operated its programs at this location for over 20 16 It offers selective programs for 75 students years. 17 as specified in its original order. Operation of programs on the first floor has not been objectionable 18 19 to neighboring property during this period. 20 amendment The requested involves 21 increasing the existing space to include occupancy of 22 the basement level of the building to provide more 23 room for existing programs and academics. This does not involve an increase in the student population or 24

additional programs.

The educational use will be self-contained within a masonry building and basement. Therefore, the noise impact will be minimal.

The proposed amendment involves minor interior modifications, not involving new building construction or any other major operational or programmatic changes to the campus plan.

Since the material facts upon which original approvals were based have not changed, does not believe that expansion to the basement would create any objectionable conditions for the neighborhood. The proposed uses for the rooms would not affect current loading and parking facilities, signage, or recreational facilities, nor will produce a change in the activities currently conducted on campus.

The amendment is completely within the campus plan boundary, with minimal impact predicted on parking, vehicular circulation, or other conditions, which may be deemed objectionable by the neighborhood. Therefore, granting this special exception will be in harmony with the general purpose of the zoning regs and zoning map, and OP supports the amendment to allow an increase of campus space to include the basement level of the building.

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1	Our report also included that conditions 3
2	through 10 of the old order remain. However, we
3	realize that the applicant also proposed conditions,
4	and later determined that there was no substantial
5	difference between conditions of the previous order
6	and those proposed. Since they do not change the
7	facts upon which we based our recommendation, and, as
8	such, we have no objection to their proposed
9	conditions.
10	Thank you.
11	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: Thank you.
12	Any questions for Ms. Thomas? Questions?
13	All right. I would just note that we have
14	a memo from the Department of Transportation in the
15	file with stating no objection to the application.
16	We have a letter of support from ANC-2B. Is there
17	anyone who'd like to testify in support of the
18	application? Anyone who would like to testify in
19	opposition to the application?
20	Okay. Any closing remarks, Mr. Collins?
21	MR. COLLINS: We thank you for your time
22	and attention, and ask that you approve our case at
23	the earliest possible date.
24	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: Okay. Mr. Hood?
25	VICE CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Madam Chair, I'd

1	like to move that we approve the request approval
2	of the amendment to approve campus plan for further
3	processing to permit the space expansion for current
4	programs and administrative functions to the basement
5	of the building located in an R-5-B zone district in
6	Square 69, Lot 821, Zoning Commission Case 03-32.
7	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: Would that include
8	the eight conditions?
9	VICE CHAIRPERSON HOOD: It would include
10	the I think the Office of Planning recommended two
11	changes to the conditions, and also conditions 3
12	through 10.
13	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: I believe what Ms.
14	Thomas said that's what they did recommend in their
15	report.
16	VICE CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay.
17	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: She is they're
18	saying they are basically
19	VICE CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Upon their
20	recommendation.
21	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: Okay. I would second
22	that.
23	Any discussion? This has been an easy
24	one. All those in favor, please say aye.
25	(Chorus of ayes.)

1	Those opposed, please say no.
2	(No response.)
3	No one opposed.
4	Ms. Schellin?
5	MS. SCHELLIN: Staff will record the vote
6	three to zero to two to approve Case Number 03-32,
7	Commissioner Hood moving, Commissioner Mitten
8	seconding, Commissioner May in favor, Commissioner
9	Parsons and Commissioner Hannaham not present, not
10	voting.
11	CHAIRPERSON MITTEN: Thank you. This is
12	nice and painless for us.
13	And for those who are here for our special
14	public meeting, we will convene that at 7:30.
15	Thank you.
16	(Whereupon, at 7:01 p.m., the proceedings
17	in the foregoing matter were concluded.)
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